

XXXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letter :—

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Andria 210

Fordingbridge, June 1st, 1861.

SIR,—Since my letter to you in February, which appeared in the last Number of 'The Ibis,' I have had an opportunity of inspecting the third edition of Mr. Hewitson's work on the Eggs of British Birds, and now beg to offer a few remarks, which, I hope, may result in the acquisition of a reliable list of British birds, properly so called.

	Species.
There are figured in the 3rd edition of Hewitson.....	286
Enumerated in 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata	35
	321
But we must deduct the Snowy Owl and Bewick's Swan, as they are figured in Hewitson and also occur in 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata	 2
	319
In the 'Zoologist' List, and not occurring in Hewitson, or 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata, there are	34
In the 3rd edition of Yarrell, but not in the above 'Ibis,' 'Zoo- logist,' or Hewitson's Lists	5
Noticed in 'The Ibis' and in none of the above Lists	2
Total number of Birds regarded as British by various authorities	360

Now, there is no doubt that all Hewitson's figures of eggs are those of *British* birds, and that all the birds in 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata are really *British*. In order somewhat to narrow the point at issue, I will now enumerate those species which occur in the 'Zoologist' list, in the 3rd edition of 'Yarrell,' and in the last two Numbers of 'The Ibis,' but which are not mentioned in the 3rd edition of Hewitson, or in 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata, as amongst these must be found those which, without sufficient reason, have obtained a place in the British list—some, perhaps, through mistake, some on slender evidence, and some in consequence of having been improperly regarded as distinct species.

The following list must also of necessity contain those spe-

cies of British birds whose eggs have been discovered since the 3rd edition of Hewitson was published; and these were stated to be at least eight in number, in 'The Ibis' for October 1859.

List of Birds occurring in the 'Zoologist' List, but not mentioned in Hewitson's 3rd edition, or 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata.

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Greenland Falcon. | 24. Red-crested Duck. |
| 2. Rufous Sedge Warbler. | 25. Paget's Pochard. |
| 3. Bohemian Waxwing. | 26. Smew. |
| 4. American Cuckoo. | 27. Hooded Merganser. |
| 5. Belted Kingfisher. | 28. Ringed Guillemot. |
| 6. Purple Martin. | 29. Swift Tern. |
| 7. Passenger Pigeon. | 30. Sooty Tern. |
| 8. Sand Grouse. | 31. White-winged Black Tern. |
| 9. Barbary Partridge. | 32. Masked Gull. |
| 10. Cream-coloured Courser. | 33. Laughing Gull. |
| 11. Andalusian Hemipode. | 34. Dusky Shearwater. |
| 12. Little Egret. | |
| 13. Buff-backed Heron. | <hr/> Mr. Yarrell. |
| 14. Squacco Heron. | 35. American Mottled Owl. |
| 15. American Bittern. | 36. Red-winged Starling. |
| 16. Yellow-shanks Sandpiper. | 37. Great Spotted Cuckoo. |
| 17. Bartram's Sandpiper. | 38. Virginian Quail. |
| 18. Sabine's Snipe. | 39. American Scaup. |
| 19. North American Stint. | <hr/> |
| 20. Mate Swan. | In 'Ibis.' |
| 21. Polish Swan. | 40. Serine Finch. |
| 22. Bimaculated Duck. | 41. American Meadow Starling. |
| 23. Surf Scoter. | |

Now, Sir, if you, or any of your valued contributors, will inform me, in the next Number of 'The Ibis,' or in any other way, how many of the forty-one species enumerated above ought to be considered British, and at the same time how many of the forty-one species have had their eggs discovered since the 3rd edition of Hewitson was published, I shall feel greatly obliged.

I may add, in conclusion, that I think 'The Ibis' List of Desiderata is capable of a little legitimate enlargement. Take, for instance, Sabine's Snipe, which certainly, as I believe, has undoubted claims to rank as a British bird, and, so far as I know, the egg of which has not yet been obtained. Nevertheless this bird, which "does not seem to have fallen into the hands

of any naturalist out of the British Islands*,” finds no place in ‘The Ibis’ List of Desiderata†.

Yours, &c.,

BEAVEN RAKE.

A letter, addressed to the Editor by Mr. J. J. Monteiro, who has already done good service in Angolan‡ ornithology, is dated from the province of Cambambe, Angola, February 6th, 1861, and says,—

“I have only time to pen these few lines to inform you that I am well, and that, despite the rainy season (now at its thickest), I have already managed to preserve thirty skins of different species of birds. Nearly the whole are different from those I collected and noticed before at Bembe. Amongst the skins are several which I think are new, and all are very beautiful. Amongst those I suppose new is a Great Kingfisher from the River Quanza (Coanza of English maps). None of the descriptions of Kingfishers in Swainson’s ‘Birds of Africa’ (the only work I have at present with me) accord with my specimen. Another good piece of news is, that ‘Plantain Eaters,’ and said to be of several species, abound within a few miles of my present locality, and so ‘*get-at-able*’ that I have already purchased two live specimens of the *Corythaix erythrophus*, of which one is in perfect health, and the other dead. As soon as the rainy season is over, I will obtain more skins, and very likely some new species.

“Please send my kindest regards to Dr. Hartlaub, and tell him that it would do him and you good to come and spend a few months on the magnificent river Coanza—magnificent not so much in size or body of water, as in vegetation, scenery, and ornithology.

“I am, unfortunately, removed from the vicinity of its finest part, which is as far as Cambambe (the fort and station of), though within a very few miles north of its unnavigable part. I am about thirty to forty miles west of Pungo Andongo.”

* *Vide* Yarrell’s British Birds, 2nd edit. p. 42.

† Sabine’s Snipe is considered, we believe, by the best authorities to be merely a melanism of the Common Snipe.—ED.

‡ Cf. P. Z. S. 1860, p. 109.

Mr. Wallace's letters from Ternate (of December 10th, 1860), enclosing the valuable paper already given (*anteà*, p. 283), contain several passages which may interest our readers:—

✓ “I do not like the figure of *Semioptera wallacii*: the shoulder-plumes are not sufficiently erected; neither is the contrast of colour between the pure whiteness and the dark silky ash of the back sufficiently marked.”

“The Dutch have just sent out a collector for the Leyden Museum to the Moluccas. He is now at Ternate, and goes to spend two years in Gilolo and Batchian, and then to N. Guinea. He will, of course (having four hunters constantly employed, and not being obliged to make his collecting pay expenses), do much more than I have been able to do; but I think I have got the cream of it all. His name is Bernstein; he has resided long in Java, as doctor at a Sanatorium, and tells me he has already sent large collections to Leyden, including the nests and eggs of more than a hundred species of birds! Are these yet arranged and exhibited? They must form a most interesting collection*.

“Many thanks for your list of Parrots†. My collections already furnish many corrections of the localities. Allow me here to make a remark on the constant changes of specific names by yourself and Mr. Gray. It strikes me that, by forcing the law of priority to its extreme limits, you create a complicated synonymy, instead of settling it. Was not that law made to decide among several names already in use—not to introduce diversity where uniformity of nomenclature has hitherto existed? What is gained by changing *Eclectus linnaei* into *E. cardinalis*, and *Paradisea superba* into *P. atra*, when it is almost certain that such changes will not be generally adopted? I believe the synonymy of Natural History will never be settled till a tribunal shall be appointed by general assent, from whose decrees there shall be no appeal. It matters absolutely nothing whether a bird has one name or another; but it is of the utmost importance that it should not have two or three at once. A synonymical catalogue, which should be authoritative and final by the general

* These have been described at length in two articles in Cabanis' 'Journal für Ornithologie,' which we have already noticed ('Ibis,' 1860, pp. 94 & 299).

† See P. Z. S. 1860, p. 223.

consent of naturalists in congress assembled, would be a work worthy of the century. Let ornithologists be the first in the field, and the other -ologists will soon follow."

"The Cockatoos puzzle me greatly. You make my Lombock sp. *C. æquatorialis*, which Temminck says is peculiar to N. Gilolo and N. Celebes. Do you make it a synonym of *C. sulphurea*, which you do not mention?*" You will see small specimens of a Cockatoo from Mysol, which I thought were *C. æquatorialis*. I have just received a very small specimen from Gilolo, bearing the same relation to *C. cristata* that *C. sulphurea* does to *C. triton*. It will be, I suppose, quite new."

"The larger and smaller specimens of *Megapodius* from Mysol are also curious. In colour they are exactly alike; but the size of the bill and feet is so different that they must be distinct. Between the *Trichoglossus* of Amboyna and Ceram and that of the Papuan Islands I can discover no difference, and I suspect that *T. nigrigularis* of G. R. Gray must be suppressed. You have left out *Lorius domicella* altogether from your list, giving *L. tricolor* to Amboyna in its place, which latter is wholly Papuan. *Eos cyanostrata* is a native of Timor-laut; and of *Eos reticulata* and *squamata* I saw nothing in Amboyna and Ceram, and believe they do not exist there. *Aprosmictus amboinensis* is a species strictly confined to Ceram, which you have not given. It is quite distinct from the *A. dorsalis* of New Guinea. The *Psittacidae* of the Solomon Islands seem so exactly representative of those of New Guinea and the Moluccas, as to show that they must be included in the Papuan subregion, and (if true *Lories* are not found in New Caledonia) will mark its eastern limits. New Ireland and the eastern parts of New Guinea no doubt still contain many fine things in this group."

The last letters received by Mr. S. Stevens from Mr. Wallace are dated Delli in Timor, February 6th, 1861, and state that he had been there a month, and intended waiting two more. The country was barren, and, Australia-like, poor in insects; but birds were tolerably abundant, though not of very fine species.

* No. *C. sulphurea* is certainly separable, and it is probable that the Lombock bird belongs to this form; the Timor species being, according to Temminck, the true *C. sulphurea*.—P. L. S.

Mr. Gould informs us that the Night-Heron of the Falkland Islands, which we have hitherto termed *N. gardeni**, and concerning which Capt. Abbott has written an interesting note in our last Number, is not the same as the North-American bird, as we had imagined from Mr. Gould himself having called it *Nycticorax americanus* (see P. Z. S. 1859, p. 96), but belongs to the darker-coloured species found in the southern parts of South America, *Nycticorax obscurus*, Licht., Bp. Consp. ii. p. 141. With regard to the *Larus roseiventris* of the Falkland Islands (p. 166), we have endeavoured to solve the question of its specific validity by sending a specimen to the Berlin Museum, whence Dr. Cabanis has obligingly furnished us with the following note respecting the species:—

“*Larus roseiventris* of Gould cannot be confounded with *L. maculipennis* of Lichtenstein (*Mouette blanche*, Azar. ?), because *L. maculipennis* has the greater part of the wings black, only spotted with white.

“*Larus albipennis*, Licht., is identical with *L. glaucotes*, Meyen, the only difference being that Meyen’s original example is rather smaller. I can find no specific distinction.

“*Larus roseiventris*, therefore, has only to be compared with *L. glaucotes*, Meyen. These two birds are very much alike, but may perhaps be considered separable, as forms belonging respectively to the eastern and western coasts. *L. roseiventris* differs in its somewhat smaller size, in its remarkably smaller and shorter bill, shorter feet, and its underside not being pure white, but tinged with rose-colour.”

In part i. of the ‘Journal für Ornithologie’ for this year, G. von Rosenberg of Amboyna announces the discovery of a new species of Cassowary in the island of Salawattie, which he proposes to call *C. kaupi*. It has *no wattles*, and appears to be quite distinct from the several other species of this genus which have lately been described under the names *C. bennettii*, *C. uniappendiculatus*, and *C. bicarunculatus*.

* See P. Z. S. 1860, p. 387, and ‘Ibis,’ 1861, p. 157.